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First Committee
3rd meeting
Tuesday, 3 October 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairperson: Mrs. Juul ..... (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: I remind representatives to limit their statements to 10 minutes — or less — for those speaking in their national capacity and to 15 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations.

I would also like to reiterate that the use of the rolling list means that representatives should be prepared to speak sooner than they had originally planned.

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Madam, on your election to chair the Committee this year. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau. I am confident that under your leadership, the work of the Committee to achieve its mandate and objectives will be greatly facilitated.

Indonesia fully associates itself with the statement made yesterday on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We are gathered here today against the backdrop of a series of setbacks in multilateral disarmament forums in recent years. The lack of progress in pursuing disarmament and non-proliferation objectives is a cause of great distress for all those who aspire to a peaceful and stable world. It is imperative that lessons be learned from those setbacks.

We are dismayed that there is increased scepticism in some States about the effectiveness of multilateral institutions and instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Some want their global superiority in weaponry to remain untouched, yet at the same time they are asking others to control their armament capabilities. The role of the First Committee is all the more important because of those realities.

In this context, symptomatic treatment and ad hoc solutions will not yield durable results. Multilateralism should be at the heart of all of our efforts and negotiations in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. We need to do better if we are indeed committed to the promotion of international peace and security.

International concern about the proliferation risk of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, is clearly intensifying. But it should not be forgotten that thousands of nuclear weapons still exist and that even more sophisticated versions of such deadly weapons are being developed.

Some continue to convey the message that nuclear weapons are intolerable in the hands of rogue States and terrorists. We believe that those catastrophic devices are dangerous in anyone's hands, including in the hands of nuclear-weapon States. We should always keep in mind the danger posed by such weapons, be it

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from accidents or miscalculations. We should not try to develop new nuclear weapons. On the contrary, the existing stock of such weapons should be outlawed and eliminated in a systematic and progressive manner.

Rhetoric alone will not suffice to address this issue. Leadership for peace and disarmament should be through example. The eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is not beyond the world's reach. The failure to act is because there is still a lack of leadership on the part of nuclear-weapon States. They do not seem to take seriously their commitment to nuclear disarmament. That is why we will not stop urging them to take the necessary steps to make further progress on nuclear disarmament in a verifiable and irreversible manner.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) continues to be the landmark international treaty for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, for promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and for achieving nuclear disarmament. The NPT review process serves as an important mechanism for assessing progress in the implementation of the global nuclear non-proliferation norms and commitments. The new cycle of the NPT review process, which will begin next year with the first preparatory meeting in Vienna, will provide a new opportunity to the States parties to show their commitment for a safe and secure world. In the next five years, the States parties to the Treaty should consider which practical steps might be taken to strengthen the Treaty and to ensure its relevance to the present situation.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) continues to languish due to the refusal of some nuclear-weapon States to adhere to the Treaty. As a signatory of the CTBT, Indonesia believes that the prohibition of nuclear tests, whether explosive or non-explosive, is an effective measure towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We realize our responsibility and will continue our constitutional process for the ratification of the CTBT.

We also look forward to the urgent commencement of negotiations on a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty without conditions. It is important that the negotiations in that regard should focus both on existing stocks and on the future production of weapons-usable materials.

My delegation reaffirms that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a positive step towards the strengthening of global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We welcome the signing of the Treaty on the Creation of a Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, which was done in Semipalatinsk on 8 September 2006.

We are of the view that the international community should not be sceptical about the activities of some States that are parties to the NPT if they want to build a nuclear programme that is not meant for military purposes. The peaceful use of nuclear energy is an inalienable right of States, guaranteed by the NPT. In this regard, we should all recognize the role of International Atomic Energy Agency as the sole competent authority for the verification of compliance with obligations under safeguards agreements and the additional protocols.

It is unfortunate that for the seventh consecutive year the Conference on Disarmament was unable to reach agreement on a programme of work and could not even agree on the substantive report for its 2006 session. However, we welcome the exercise on a focused structured debate in the Conference on Disarmament on all agenda items and hope that this will facilitate the achievement of agreement on the programme of work in the near future.

Despite managing to hold a substantive session this year after a long impasse, the Disarmament Commission was unable to produce a substantive outcome. But we very much appreciated the efforts of the delegations during its current cycle, trying to advance ideas to bridge the divisions among member States. We look forward to the next substantive session and hope that, with enhanced political will, we will be able to narrow the differences.

In the aftermath of the inability of the 2005 World Summit to agree on any reference to disarmament and non-proliferation issues in its Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, among others, has recommended that the General Assembly consider calling another world summit focused on precisely these issues. We support such a proposal, taking into account that the idea behind it is in line with the proposal for convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which has

the support of an overwhelming majority of Member States.

Indonesia believes that the focus on the threat of weapons of mass destruction should not lessen the attention to the regulation and reduction of conventional weapons. The proliferation of conventional arms, particularly illicit small arms and light weapons, has seriously violated the peace in many regions of the world. It is disappointing that the 2006 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, adopted in 2001, not only failed to agree on a final document but was also unable to provide a mandate to the General Assembly on follow-up steps for further implementation.

As a signatory of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, Indonesia is well aware of the concerns of States parties about the status of our ratification process. Being late in ratifying the Convention does not indicate our lack of commitment to its principles and objectives. Following the submission of the draft law of ratification by the Indonesian Government to the parliament for consideration, on 11 September 2006, we are now in the final stage of the ratification process.

In conclusion, Indonesia assures the international community of its full support and cooperation in working on concrete initiatives on global disarmament and non-proliferation. We must rise up to the challenges before us with greater vigour and political will to help bring about a future that is truly worthy of our next generation and is based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

Mr. Choisuren (Mongolia): At the outset, Madam Chairperson, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election and to assure you of my delegation's full support in the discharge of your duties.

Mongolia aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I should like to make a few observations from my national perspective on issues of interest to my country.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 2006, there were 17 major armed conflicts at 16 locations around the world in 2005. The Yearbook finds that there has been a steady decline in the number of conflicts since 1999; the figure for 2005 was the lowest for the entire post-cold-war period. Yet despite the statistics, the world around us can hardly be characterized as a safer place to live. Violence, terrorist attacks and other security threats and challenges continue to ravage the daily lives of people, pushing poverty-stricken communities deeper into the abyss of despair and misery and having a negative impact on global development. The recent conflict in Lebanon was a sad reminder of the vulnerability of human security and peace in today's world.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — or even the mere existence of arsenals of such weapons — growing terrorist threats and continued access by non-State actors to ever more sophisticated weapons systems negatively affect world peace and stability. Unfortunately, a general sense of disappointment prevails today among Member States over the current situation in multilateral efforts in the field of disarmament and international security, and my delegation shares that sentiment.

Indeed, the situation does not look promising. The sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body — the Conference on Disarmament — has been paralysed for nine consecutive sessions, despite the fact that, during its 2006 session, there was some sense that positive developments might be possible.

The Disarmament Commission, although it was able to resume its work following two years of deadlock on its agenda, was nevertheless unable to make substantive progress during its most recent session. Furthermore, the lack of success of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the striking absence of language pertaining to disarmament and non-proliferation in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit; and, more recently, the failure of the United Nations Conference to Review the Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects have all been major setbacks.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, my delegation believes that we must not give in to pessimism. I am convinced that the current situation requires all Member States to display renewed political will and determination as well as increased flexibility in order to break the present impasse in different

multilateral disarmament bodies and to strengthen the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Let us make full use of the session of the First Committee of the General Assembly to engage in open and constructive dialogue so as to bridge the gap between different positions for the common good.

Mongolia, guided by the principles and objectives of its peaceful foreign policy, reflected, inter alia, in its Constitution and in the Concepts on Foreign Policy and on National Security, has consistently pursued the objective of global disarmament while according the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. Given the horrendous destructive capacity of nuclear weapons, Mongolia believes that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world would enhance both global security and Mongolia's own national security.

Mongolia calls on all States that have not yet done so to accede to all international treaties and conventions relating to weapons of mass destruction and non-proliferation and disarmament, particularly the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Bacteriological (Biological) Weapons and Toxin Weapons Convention, and to strengthen the international regime established by those treaties.

The NPT is the most important legally binding instrument available to the international community to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to work towards their complete elimination and to promote cooperation among States on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. My country is fully committed to the full implementation of the decisions of the 1995 and 2000 NPT review conferences. In particular, we believe that the 13 practical steps and systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the NPT must be fully implemented.

Against the backdrop of the current challenges faced by the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, we should now focus on preparations for the next review conference to ensure its successful outcome.

My delegation once again reiterates its strong support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the importance of its early entry into force and universality. Mongolia also supports the early conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States as a matter of priority, as well as the conclusion of a non-discriminatory, multilateral, internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

According to aforementioned *Yearbook*, the majority of major conflicts in 2005 occurred in Asia. That observation cannot but worry my country. Furthermore, in addition to the existing conflicts on the continent, two issues relating to nuclear non-proliferation have been a source of concern for countries both in and outside of Asia, namely, nuclear programmes in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mongolia strongly believes in the inalienable right of non-nuclear-weapon States that have fully complied with their obligations under the NPT to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. At the same time, in the case of Iran's nuclear programme, we also note that the process of drawing conclusions with regard to the absence of undeclared material and activities in Iran is an ongoing and time-consuming process. It is important that Iran continue to cooperate actively and fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to resolve outstanding issues in order to promote confidence and peaceful resolution of the issue.

Mongolia, a North-East Asian nation with internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free status, is in favour of a nuclear-weapon-free Korean peninsula and attaches vital importance to the resolution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear issue by peaceful means through negotiations and the early resumption of the six-party talks.

Due to its historical and geopolitical realities, North-East Asia is probably the only subregion that lacks a mechanism at the governmental level where security issues of concern could be discussed collectively. The present situation in the subregion highlights the renewed importance and relevance of the proposal made by Mongolia in 2000 from the rostrum in the General Assembly Hall on engaging North-East Asian nations in a political-security dialogue at the track 1 level.

It may be time to look into the possibility of engaging in such a dialogue, starting with a free exchange of views on the framework of such discussions among interested delegations during this session of the First Committee of the General Assembly.

My country has always been a strong supporter of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. Nuclear-weapon-free zones are a crucial element of the global non-proliferation regime and an important confidence-building measure in various regions of the world.

In that regard, my delegation warmly welcomes the signing of a nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaty by five Central Asian States in Semipalatinsk on 8 September 2006. That is an important contribution to confidence-building and stability in Asia.

In conclusion, may I note that Mongolia this year once again will submit a biannual draft resolution on Mongolia's international security and its nuclear-weapon-free status, and we look forward to its adoption by consensus, as was the case at the previous session.

Mrs. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam Chairperson, allow me to start by congratulating you on your election and on that of all the other members of the Bureau to guide our work. Colombia recognizes your country's commitment to general and complete disarmament in all its aspects, and we trust that, thanks to your professional skills and personal qualities, the First Committee will be able to successfully conclude its work during this session. My delegation would like also to warmly welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, to whom we wish every possible success in his work at the helm of this important Committee.

Colombia supports the statement made yesterday by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

One year ago, in this very forum, we deplored the worrisome state of the disarmament process. The lack of specific recommendations on disarmament and non-proliferation in the Document adopted by heads of State and Government in 2005 was a reflection of the difficulties besetting multilateralism in that field. Since then, very little, if anything, has changed in that respect. On the contrary, setbacks such as the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the deadlock in the work of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in recent years remain a cause of great concern for countries such as mine, which would like to see the disarmament machinery working to its fullest capacity.

My delegation was particularly concerned by the outcome of the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held here in New York last June and July. As one of the countries most affected by the scourge of the illicit trade in arms, Colombia deeply regrets that the Review Conference did not reach agreement on a final document reflecting the concerns and initiatives of States in their fight against this problem. The 2001 Programme of Action remains the keystone of the efforts that need to be realized to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which claims so many lives the world over each year. We also reaffirm our support for the principles contained in the Declaration of Antigua, Guatemala, signed by Latin American and Caribbean countries last May.

In recent years, Colombia has submitted draft resolutions entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", together with Japan and South Africa; a similar text will again be submitted to the First Committee at this session. We hope that the valuable support of delegations for this important issue since its introduction — support reflected in the annual adoption of these draft resolutions by consensus — will continue this year.

In spite of the seemingly bleak panorama before us, Colombia wishes to reaffirm its confidence in multilateralism as an essential path for the strengthening of our efforts and for persevering in the achievement of United Nations disarmament and non-proliferation goals. To that end, my delegation calls once again for the restoration of the First Committee's central role in the context of the mandate entrusted to the General Assembly in the Charter of the United Nations.

With a view to achieving general and complete disarmament, which Colombia promotes as a State

policy, my country has signed all international instruments on weapons of mass destruction. In that category, nuclear weapons are, without a doubt, still the most destructive weapons of all. For that reason, nuclear disarmament remains one of the top priorities of Colombia's foreign policy in the overall field of disarmament. In that respect, Colombia welcomes the agreement reached in September by five countries in Central Asia through which a new nuclear-weapon-free zone has been established under the Treaty of Semipalatinsk.

As is widely known, constitutional difficulties arising from the prohibition to make retroactive payments have prevented Colombia from ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which we entirely support in spirit and in letter. My country will continue to endeavour to overcome the difficulties surrounding this situation, which will we touch upon in greater detail during the relevant thematic debate in this Committee.

Major challenges await us during this General Assembly. We are confident that we will be able to achieve concrete and positive results on the long list of agenda items before us. My country will participate actively and concretely in the thematic debates to be held in the First Committee at this period of the session.

Mr. Baird (Australia): The Australian delegation congratulates you, Madam, on your appointment as Chair of this Committee and looks forward to working closely with you over the coming month. I would note that a copy of this statement will be made available on the Australian Mission's website.

As we all know too well, the international community failed to make anything at all of recent opportunities to make our world more secure through multilateral action on non-proliferation and disarmament. The 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the World Summit and this year's Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons all proved unable to agree on any substantive outcomes.

We must do better. As we look forward to the commencement in 2007 of the next NPT review cycle, it is self-evident that strengthened political will in dealing with non-proliferation challenges is essential if we are to preserve the benefits all States receive from the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Fresh thinking will be needed to avoid a repeat of the failed 2005 NPT Review Conference and to better orient the NPT review process to deal with current proliferation threats. Similarly, Australia looks forward to a renewed focus in the First Committee this year on practical measures to promote international peace and security.

In today's complex security environment, no single tool can meet the challenges presented by States and non-State actors that are of proliferation concern. For this reason, we support a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), disarmament and arms control issues, including through participation in export control regimes. Australia encourages a firmer and more active role for the Security Council on WMD proliferation. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) demonstrates that the responsibility for addressing the threat of WMD proliferation falls squarely within the Security Council's mandate. We welcome the Security Council's decision to extend the mandate and the work of the 1540 Committee. We also support the Council's engagement on Iran's nuclear programme and the missile activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, particularly in the light of the latter country's very concerning announcement today that it plans to conduct a nuclear test.

September marked the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), a treaty that would rid the world of nuclear weapons testing forever. Last year's vote in this Committee demonstrated that an overwhelming number of countries regarded the CTBT as a vital contribution to disarmament and non-proliferation. Through our role as coordinator on article XIV of the CTBT, Australia is actively promoting the Treaty's entry into force. Australia will again introduce a draft resolution on the CTBT in the First Committee this year.

Australia will also once again introduce a draft resolution on landmines. Australia was one of the original signatories to the Mine-Ban Convention and, as current Chair of the Meetings of the States Parties, has initiated a universalization strategy. Last year, Australia committed a further $75 million over a five-year period to mine action.

The existing multilateral proliferation and arms control framework must also be complemented by coordinated and practically focused measures. Australia is a strong supporter of the Proliferation Security Initiative, and has long advocated measures such as additional protocols of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the fissile material cut-off treaty and the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation as practical steps against the proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery. Australia is also among the authors of a new First Committee draft resolution that will provide the foundation for work towards an arms trade treaty.

It is our hope that this year the First Committee will produce strong, effective draft resolutions that will enable the international community to address in a practical way current and emerging threats to international peace and security. You, Madam Chairperson, have our unwavering support in achieving that end.

Mr. Muburi-Muita (Kenya): Madam Chairperson, I congratulate you on your appointment to preside over this important Committee. My delegation has every confidence in your ability to meet this challenge. We look forward to working closely with you with a view to realizing positive results in our deliberations.

We thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his thoughtful presentation on the numerous challenges that confront in our vital work on disarmament today. We share his assessment on all issues, especially on the disappointing outcomes of both the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the 2006 Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Kenya associates itself with the statement presented by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We also associate ourselves with the statement to be made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Union (AU).

Kenya attaches great importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its objectives. Kenya supports all efforts aimed at addressing pending issues of disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. We urge all States parties to the NPT to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and fulfil their obligations under the Treaty. We also encourage those States not party to the Treaty to join it so as to secure wider support in realizing the Treaty's goals of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, nurturing a culture of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and promoting general and complete disarmament.

The negative effects that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has in our region and elsewhere in the world is well documented. Kenya has been unequivocal in the battle for a comprehensive, sustained effort towards preventing, combating and eradicating the trade in illicit small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We attach great importance to reducing the demand for small arms, both internally and in the region. Kenya has taken deliberate measures in addressing the problem of illicit small arms, including through a national policy and plan of action, the establishment of provincial and district task forces, the destruction of arms, the strengthening of national coordination structures, the participation of civil society and the integration of these efforts into community development programmes.

Kenya continues to ascribe great importance to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Programme of Action provides a road map to address the problem of small arms and light weapons. The Programme however, needs to be backed by clear global principles governing arms transfers. Such principles, if adopted, can provide a sound basis for a global legally binding instrument. Although this may appear ambitious, in several regions of the world a great deal has already been achieved at the subregional and regional levels in terms of the development of common criteria to deal with international transfers of small arms and light weapons. Examples include the 2005 Best Practice Guidelines for the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the 2004 Southern African Economic Community (SADC) Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials, the 1998 European Union (EU) Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and the 2003 EU Common Position on the Control of Arms Brokering.

There are clear areas of commonality among major regional and multilateral initiatives, and there is

consensus on a number of specific criteria that effective small arms and light weapons transfer controls should cover. What is lacking are global standards. We need to exert ourselves more, and we need to have the political will and courage to build on the progress that has already been achieved regionally to produce a set of international small arms and light weapons transfer control guidelines that will be applicable globally. Section II, paragraph 11, of the United Nations small arms and light weapons Programme of Action provides the ideal institutional basis for such an accord. We, therefore, urge States to seize the opportunity to make substantive progress on this issue.

Last July, Kenya expressed its deep disappointment at the inability of the Review Conference to evolve a basic outcome document. We then pledged, with others, that we would pursue a more suitable way forward during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. Today, with others, Kenya is sponsoring a First Committee draft resolution that seeks to establish an effective international instrument that would regulate the international trade in conventional arms so as to prevent, combat and eradicate those sales or transfers of arms that are likely to promote conflict, crime or terrorism. We will work closely with all delegations to bring this to fruition. We urge all delegations to grasp this historic opportunity and travel with us in developing such an important outcome.

On 7 October last year, Kenya noted that multilateral solutions to disarmament were under stress (see A/C.1/60/PV.7). We welcomed and supported the proposal on initiating work on certain priority disarmament and non-proliferation issues in an effort to re-energize disarmament diplomacy at the Conference on Disarmament. Six nations, including Kenya, drove this initiative, but held back when new developments stopped the process. We are willing to explore this initiative during the present session, if the perception and reality of a "consensus veto" continues to frustrate our efforts.

I conclude by reiterating my delegation's commitment to the objectives of disarmament that are the raison d'être of the First Committee.

Mr. Udedibia (Nigeria): I wish, Madam, on behalf of the African Group, to congratulate you on your election to chair the First Committee during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. Through you, the African Group wishes to convey its congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. The Group has confidence in your ability to guide the affairs of this Committee to a successful conclusion. I assure you and the Bureau of the full support and cooperation of the African Group in addressing the task ahead.

The African Group wishes to reiterate its commitment to the achievement of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The Group believes in the need for the pursuit and eventual attainment of the goal of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in all its aspects.

The African Group remains convinced that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to humankind. The commencement of multilateral negotiations leading to early conclusion of a convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons and calling for their total elimination, has, therefore, become a necessity. Among the first steps towards the realization of this objective should be a commitment by nuclear-weapon States to immediately stop the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. Pending the total elimination of those weapons, a legally binding international instrument should be established under which nuclear-weapon States will undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. As an important confidence-building measure, such an instrument will no doubt help reduce current international political tension in certain parts of the world, particularly those of major global concern. The African Group stresses the importance of ensuring that any nuclear disarmament process be irreversible, transparent and verifiable in order to be meaningful.

The African Group recognizes that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I) was a turning point in the history of multilateral efforts to achieve disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament. The Group once again wishes to express its regret at the non-implementation of the Final Document of SSOD I 28 years after its adoption. The African Group underscores the need for convening SSOD IV in order

to give real meaning to the nuclear disarmament process.

The African Group reaffirms its belief in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a vital instrument in the maintenance of international peace and security. The Group endorses the 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference for systematic and progressive efforts to implement the unequivocal commitment undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, in keeping with article VI of the NPT. In this regard, the Group continues to express regret over the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference to produce a meaningful outcome.

The African Group reiterates its long-standing support for the total elimination of all nuclear testing. The Group stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, among other things, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. In that connection, the Group endorses the joint ministerial declaration on the CTBT, adopted in New York on 20 September. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, it is important that the moratorium on nuclear-weapons test explosions or explosions of any other nuclear device be maintained.

The African Group emphasizes the importance of strengthening the existing multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements by ensuring full compliance with and the effective implementation of those agreements, as well as their universality. The Group reaffirms its strong belief in strengthening the existing disarmament machinery as a means of advancing the process of nuclear disarmament. In that connection, the Group expresses deep disappointment over the continued failure of the Conference on Disarmament to begin substantive work. The Group calls on the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a work programme as soon as possible so that substantive negotiations can start.

The African Group reiterates its support for the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States in the regions concerned. In that regard, we welcome the signing of the treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free zone by Central Asian States on 8 September. The Group recalls the decision of the eighth ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union, which took place in Khartoum from 16 to 21 January, in which it called on States that have not signed or ratified the Pelindaba Treaty on the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone or its protocols that concern them to do so in order to enable the Treaty to enter into force without further delay. We urge the affected States to implement or comply, as applicable, with the decision of the Council as soon as possible.

The African Group calls on States to take appropriate measures to prevent any dumping of nuclear or radioactive waste that infringes on the sovereignty of States. In that regard, the Group recalls the 1991 resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity on the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa. The Group also calls for the effective implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency Code of Practice on the International Transboundary Movement of Radioactive Waste as a means of enhancing the protection of all States from the dumping of radioactive waste on their territories.

The African Group wishes to reiterate its belief, as also recognized in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, in the full implementation of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a key element in promoting long-term security and for creating conditions for sustainable development in many developing countries, especially those in Africa. To achieve the desired results, it is imperative that the international community deal with the threat posed by the illicit small arms trade in a comprehensive and action-oriented manner. In that connection, the Group regrets the failure of the first Review Conference on the Programme of Action to agree on a final document. Considering the importance of that issue, we call on Member States to find a solution to that impasse.

Finally, the African Group continues to support the establishment of a group of governmental experts on brokering, considering that arms brokering plays a significant role in the illicit arms trade.

Mr. Al-Najem (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to express to you, Madam, on behalf of Kuwait, our sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I stress my country's readiness to cooperate with you in making your tenure a success. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election.

I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his statement at the opening of the general debate. I also endorse the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The failure twice last year to reach a consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation was a clear sign of the widening of international divisions on the most serious threat to international peace and security. The squandering of those opportunities to address pressing problems has made Member States more determined than ever to deal with that important issue, to prepare themselves for a historic transcendence of their differences, and to cooperate on the elimination of nuclear threats.

Although the international community now understands the dangers of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to international peace and security, we have yet to achieve any progress towards averting their threat because of the lack of political will on the part of some to implement their commitments to international conventions and treaties. That failure highlights the importance of pursuing our efforts, adopting the requisite confidence-building measures, reviving such multilateral conventions as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and promoting disarmament.

Kuwait believes in the importance of collective action to ratify international conventions and treaties, from the NPT to the Chemical Weapons Convention; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident; the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency; and the comprehensive safeguards agreements and their protocols. We urge all States to conclude comprehensive safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to adhere to the safeguards regime in its entirety.

We believe that the Additional Protocol appended to the safeguards mechanism is yet another useful way to monitor prohibited and undeclared nuclear activities. We hope that all States parties to the NPT will comply with the provisions of their safeguards agreement and work closely with the IAEA, through negotiation and constructive dialogue, to resolve all problems and allay all suspicions concerning their programmes.

In that context, we call on Israel — the only State in the Middle East that is not a signatory to the NPT and that possesses nuclear weapons, in violation of resolutions of international legitimacy — to accede to the Treaty forthwith, to eliminate its nuclear arsenal, and to subject all its nuclear facilities to the IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime. We stress our support for making the Middle East, including the Gulf region, a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. We call on the international community to prevent the sale of scientific and technological goods to Israel and to any other State that seeks to develop weapons of mass destruction production programmes.

I would point here to the 1997 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to solve disputes. We reiterate our support for the conclusion of a non-discriminatory multilateral fissile material cut-off treaty in order to prevent the manufacture of nuclear weapons and other vectors of nuclear explosions.

The State of Kuwait urges the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran to continue to cooperate with the international community and the IAEA in allaying to rest all fears concerning the nature of its nuclear programme and to reach a full diplomatic solution to prevent the exacerbation of the crisis. That can be achieved if all parties concerned demonstrate flexibility, wisdom and a sense of responsibility. Here, account must be taken of the environmental dangers that could result from building the Bushehr nuclear reactor on the Gulf coast, since the neighbouring countries depend on desalination for much of their drinking water. In addition, many capitals are only a few dozen kilometres away from this nuclear reactor.

In its resolution 1673 (2006) of last April, the Security Council renewed the call it made in resolution 1540 (2004), which aims to keep weapons of mass

destruction and related materials out of the hands of terrorist groups. Kuwait welcomed that resolution and has submitted its national report to the Secretariat; our report outlined procedures we are following to guarantee our commitment to the provisions of the resolution. In that context, we would like to recall that last September Kuwait signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Kuwait would like to echo the Final Declaration of the 2005 Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which calls upon States that have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so, especially since entry into force requires the ratification of certain States. It calls upon nuclear-weapon states to suspend or halt all nuclear tests until the Treaty enters into force.

Concerning the illicit trade in small and light weapons, Kuwait welcomed the General Assembly's adoption in December of last year of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (decision 60/519).

Despite the failure of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons to agree on further measures, it succeeded in drawing world attention to the issue. That is valuable because such weapons have fuelled many conflicts and have taken hundreds of thousands of lives, in addition to hampering development, in particular that of developing countries.

In conclusion, we hope that the negotiations in the First Committee will be transparent and comprehensive and that we can reach consensus in order to fulfil the aspirations and expectations of Member States as regards achieving international peace and security.

Mr. Berbash (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, Madam, I would like to congratulate you warmly on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee. We would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We are confident that you will ably conduct our work, in view of your experience and high diplomatic skills. My delegation will cooperate fully with you as you carry out your lofty duties.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and with that made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

The establishment of international peace and security is among the noblest purposes of the United Nations. There is no doubt that genuine and complete disarmament, starting with weapons of mass destruction, is essential in the achievement of that objective. However, this cannot be achieved without the cooperation of all Member States in a spirit of goodwill and full transparency.

In this connection, when we speak of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear non-proliferation, we must not confuse nuclear armament programmes with the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. International law guarantees the right of every State to engage in scientific research for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. My delegation always supports negotiations and allowing the necessary time for discussion in order to find just solutions to problems faced by the international community, instead of resorting to threats and the imposition of sanctions, which in themselves do not provide solutions to any problem. On the contrary, sanctions often make these problems more serious and complex.

My country continues to cooperate in all sincerity and transparency with international agencies, organizations and States that have shown readiness to cooperate in implementing the voluntary initiative taken by my country on 19 December 2003 and in helping my country comply with its obligations under relevant international conventions and resolutions. At present, we are seeking to adapt our laws to the provisions of those international conventions and resolutions. On 12 July 2006, we deposited instruments of ratification to our International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Additional Protocol and to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. We signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, on 16 September 2005.

On the practical level, we are transforming our facilities and utilizing our capabilities to carry out peaceful development programmes. In this respect, our delegation would like to express its gratitude to organizations and States that have worked with us to

achieve those objectives. We would also like to thank the States of the Group of Eight (G-8) for their readiness to cooperate with us in this area.

On 11 November 2004, my delegation applied for membership of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and has taken practical measures to comply with the criteria for acquisition of missiles in accordance with MTCR rules, as well as to exercise control over the export of materials in accordance with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

We have also complied with our commitment to respect the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. My country was among the first to sign the Code, on 25 November 2002, and we hope that States will support our application to join the MTCR as soon as possible.

My delegation would like to join in expressing disappointment about the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and of the 2006 small arms and light weapons Review Conference. We believe that reactivating the Conference on Disarmament is the best way to ensure the multilateralism we need and that the Conference is the ideal forum for the achievement of disarmament and non-proliferation.

My delegation welcomes the increase in world understanding and supports efforts to establish zones free of weapons of mass destruction. We reiterate our support for making the Middle East a zone free of such weapons in order to achieve peace and security not only in the Middle East but throughout the world. Unfortunately, a nuclear-weapon-free zone still cannot be established in the Middle East because of the attitude of Israel, which continues to develop and produce nuclear weapons without monitoring or accountability and to refuse to join the relevant international conventions and treaties, thus posing a constant threat to the peace and security of the region and the world as a whole. Thus, the major Powers must fully shoulder their responsibilities by putting pressure on Israel to join all international instruments relating to nuclear disarmament and weapons of mass destruction, and Israel must submit its nuclear installations to international safeguards.

Current policies reflect double standards and selectivity. Non-nuclear-weapon States must have assurances so that they can feel secure; responding to their concerns will ultimately prevent them from manufacturing such weapons themselves.

In addition to our concern about the number of countries that possess weapons of mass destruction, we are faced with another problem: the large number of landmines and explosive remnants of war remaining in our territory. Such devices continue to kill, injure or disable thousands of innocent citizens. This represents an obstacle to development and to investment in regions where such mines and explosives are buried. We are therefore asking the States responsible for those mines to provide technical and financial assistance for their removal and compensation for the victims. My delegation supports the mine victims forum, which is mobilizing the necessary assistance with a view to resolving these problems.

My delegation renews its appeal to make the Mediterranean a region of peace and communications in which peoples can achieve their common objectives. But that cannot be done without the dismantling of foreign bases and fleets and without ensuring respect for the sovereignty of all States of the region and non-intervention in their internal affairs.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to express its readiness to contribute to all international disarmament efforts and to free humanity from weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We are convinced that regional and international peace and security are possible only through the strengthened international cooperation and international understanding among peoples in all areas. We therefore call upon the States that possess nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, whose criteria for possessing such weapons should not go beyond those set out in existing conventions, to eliminate such weapons in order to bring us closer to a world where peace and tranquillity can reign.

Ms. Haile (Eritrea): I should like at the outset to extend my delegation's warmest congratulations to you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee during the sixty-first session. My sincere appreciation goes to your predecessor, Ambassador Choi Young-jin of the Republic of Korea, who guided our work to a successful conclusion during the sixtieth session.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia

on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

We are meeting once again in this Committee to address issues related to international security, disarmament, arms control and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It should come as no surprise that results over the past year have been mixed, as achievements have been countervailed by challenges.

My delegation regrets that the 2006 Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects failed to agree on an outcome document which would have improved on the way forward in the implementation of the Programme.

The climate for agreement on arms control and disarmament has actually deteriorated. Efforts to consolidate global treaties, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, have stagnated. An insufficient number of countries have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and negotiations have not even opened on the much-needed treaty to stop the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. While we cannot expect to change the somewhat strained international climate overnight, my delegation believes that there are actions that can be taken to preserve and build international confidence to advance the cause of international disarmament and non-proliferation. These include reaffirming our collective commitment to preserve the sanctity of international agreements and collectively recognizing the need to pursue progress concurrently on both fronts — disarmament and non-proliferation.

My delegation is pleased to reaffirm that my country, Eritrea, is deeply committed to international efforts aimed at arms control and the non-proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Accordingly, Eritrea is a State party to many of the conventions on arms control, including to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Eritrea has signed the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and is a subscribing State to the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. Furthermore, Eritrea is also an active member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

My country has a profound and abiding interest in the maintenance of international and regional peace and security, as well as in the peaceful and legal settlement of disputes.

My Government, fully convinced of the importance of respecting the United Nations Charter and international law, is ready to implement the final and binding decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. Eritrea is likewise willing to contribute to regional peace, security and stability. In that regard, Eritrea is currently engaged in the collective negotiation efforts to promote peace and stability in the Sudan. My Government is hosting the eastern Sudan peace talks between the Sudanese Government and the Eastern Front.

My country reaffirms its strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and pledges its full cooperation in combating that phenomenon. We have acceded to the Organization of African Unity Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. Law enforcement authorities of the State of Eritrea have been working together with their counterparts in other countries of our subregion and on the continent at large, as well as cooperating with Interpol in the exchange of information on the prevention and suppression of terrorism.

Finally, Madam, my delegation wishes to express its hope and confidence that the Committee will be able to move purposefully forward under your leadership. My delegation assures you of its fullest cooperation and support.

Mr. Al-Taii (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am making this statement on behalf of the Permanent Representative of Iraq, Mr. Hamid Al-Bayati.

I am pleased to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the Committee and in wishing you every success in your work as you guide our deliberations. We assure you of our full cooperation in the process of formulating draft resolutions and other

recommendations that will be received favourably by all countries.

It is an axiom that proliferation leads to an arms race and that a lack of trust and transparency leads to suspicion, tension and conflict and the possession of weapons, both conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. The international community is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security; therefore, we must be committed to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation for a world or a region without controls is a dangerous one.

The Middle East continues to face the problem of insecurity and instability. The danger of the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and of their means of delivery exists and is real. That has complicated the situation and has caused an increase in the level of terrorism in all its brutal forms and manifestations. Iraq believes it is essential that the Middle East be declared a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. Therefore, in all relevant forums — including the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the League of Arab States — we are appealing to all States, without exception, to accede to treaties on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and calling for the implementation in the Middle East of the IAEA's full-scope safeguards regime. Here, we wish to strongly emphasize that Israel must adhere to the NPT and subject its nuclear facilities to international inspection.

Iraq has experienced an extremely difficult period because of the rash policies of the previous regime, which caused the loss or destruction of our country's economy, wealth and resources. The previous regime believed that possession of weapons of mass destruction would enable it to dominate the region, but the result was exactly the opposite: history tells us what happened next. Under its new Government, Iraq will strive to become an element for regional and international security and stability and to avoid anything that could increase tension in the Middle East. Iraq's priority now is to rebuild so, alongside other countries, it can contribute again to modern civilization.

The current Government has accorded top priority to its commitments under all international agreements and conventions. Our current constitution — which was supported by 79 per cent of Iraqis in a referendum — states that the Iraqi Government must respect and fulfil its commitments under the NPT and prohibits the development, production or use of weapons of mass destruction of any kind. To translate those words into reality, the relevant Iraqi authorities have studied the various agreements and conventions to which we have not yet acceded. As a result, the cabinet has agreed that Iraq should accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention and has made recommendations in that regard to parliament, as the competent legislative authority to ratify such agreements. We are now in the process of studying the Model Additional Protocol of the IAEA's comprehensive safeguards regime. My delegation will work with other delegations to sponsor draft resolutions that meet our expectations.

My country has been facing the most brutal forms of terrorism. We are doing our utmost to build a new Iraq that will take its place among civilized nations, having learned the lessons of history. Thus, Iraq, with renewed hope, will serve as an element of stability for its neighbours and for all of humanity.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): As we begin our work at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, I should like to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee and to assure you of the full support of the Senegalese delegation in carrying out your duties.

Senegal associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States.

I should like to emphasize my country's great concern at the continuing deadlock in the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation process. Indeed, the most important disarmament mechanisms — the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) — are all at an impasse. Compounding that are the difficulties that were observed in arriving at a consensus outcome document at the 2006 Review Conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms.

These deadlocks in addressing disarmament issues are occurring at a time when the international

community faces major challenges in the area of maintaining international peace and security, particularly with regard to the risks of tension linked to nuclear proliferation.

The only forum in which it is still possible to engage in discussions and take decisions thus remains the First Committee. Hence the great importance that we attach to our work, in terms of guiding and providing impetus for the disarmament and non-proliferation process, which is now at a standstill. However, we should stress that the success of our deliberations will depend largely on constructive commitment, a spirit of openness and a sense of compromise on the part of delegations.

In that regard, Senegal believes that the following issues are particularly important and should be addressed by the Committee with courage and clear-sightedness.

The first is strengthening the authority of the NPT by ensuring its universalization and supporting its three pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses. The conclusion of an arrangement on negative security guarantees could help strengthen the authority of the NPT. Such an arrangement would dissipate the fears of non-nuclear-weapon States and would usher in an era of confidence, which could only be beneficial for the NPT. However, we should not make the mistake of thinking that the NPT alone will enable us to achieve our disarmament and proliferation objectives.

Although it enjoys greater support than any other disarmament treaty, with 188 ratifying States, the NPT needs to be supplemented, on the one hand by the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and, on the other hand, by the conclusion of an instrument to cut off the production of fissile materials for military purposes. Due recognition of those two instruments, which relate respectively to the qualitative improvement and the quantitative development of nuclear weapons, would enable the international community to take a decisive step towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The attention given to nuclear weapons must not divert our attention from conventional weapons, the control and reduction of which we must figure into our priorities. Here, Senegal is pleased that the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms — which was established by the Secretary-General and in whose work my country was honoured to participate — succeeded in reaching a satisfactory compromise outcome that will increase transparency and enhance confidence with respect to transfers of conventional arms. The Group, however, has not yet satisfactorily addressed the issue of small arms and light weapons transfers, which remain a major source of concern for the international community and, in particular, for zones of tension, especially in Africa.

Following the failure of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, it seems urgent that additional measures be taken to ensure proper implementation of that instrument, which should also be supplemented quickly by an instrument on the brokering in these weapons.

With regard to chemical and biological weapons, we should ensure that the conventions relating to these issues are made stronger and more universal and that exchanges of information increase. Such exchanges of information would aim to effectively apply these instruments on a global level and to limit the risks of biological and chemical weapons in all their forms.

The world is facing complex security challenges. In order to meet them, we should bear in mind that security must be collective. Hence the need to view it through a global prism, with inclusive and unimpassioned dialogue that will take into account the security concerns of all States. In that way, we will contribute to strengthening multilateralism in the spheres of disarmament and non-proliferation, and at the same time avoid isolated action, always a source of tension and of dispute.

Mr. Mercado (Philippines): The Philippines joins other delegations in congratulating you, Madam, on your assumption of the Chair and on having made history in becoming the first woman to preside over the First Committee. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their well-deserved elections.

My delegation expresses its appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Nobuaki Tanaka for giving us a broader picture of the disarmament and international security environment in the statement he delivered yesterday.

The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

No one would dispute the fact that the proliferation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons poses a serious threat to peace, safety and security, and even to sustained economic growth and development. Developing countries are more vulnerable, because the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons has fuelled armed conflict in some parts of the world, adversely affecting millions.

Like other delegations, we had high hopes during the 2006 Conference to review the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and are thus disappointed that it was unable to reach agreement on a formal outcome document. During the Review Conference last June, the Philippines highlighted four points: international cooperation, the need to promote dialogue and a culture of peace in the implementation of the Programme of Action, the important role of civil society and follow-up mechanisms.

We wish to reiterate those points as we look forward to a new draft resolution that would set a direction for the international community's action on the issue of the prevention of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Such a draft resolution should emphasize the follow-up mechanisms to effectively implement the Programme of Action; these would be addressed by the next review conference.

The Philippines would also like to underscore the important role that civil society plays in our efforts to address the scourge of trafficking in small arms and light weapons through the promotion of a culture of peace. The role of civil society was recognized in several provisions of the Programme of Action. As such, it should have a role in international, subregional and national efforts to implement the Programme.

In particular, the Philippines recognizes the role that faith communities and interfaith cooperation can have in implementing the Programme of Action. We have been actively encouraging faith communities to call on their respective followers to extend their full cooperation in efforts to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We have been actively pursuing and promoting interfaith dialogue among the various faith communities with a view to coming up with a coherent and unified stand on this issue. We believe that the tripartite Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, participated in by 50 Governments, 15 United Nations agencies and 110 religious non-governmental organizations (NGOs) accredited with the United Nations, can be called upon to extend its support in this regard.

Five months ago, Secretary-General Kofi Annan told his audience in Tokyo that the world was at a crossroads and had to choose between two paths: one that leads to the restriction and reversal of nuclear proliferation and another that leads to a growing number of States feeling obliged to arm themselves with weapons of mass destruction and non-State actors acquiring the means to carry out nuclear terrorism. In his speech, the Secretary-General lamented that the international community appears to be sleepwalking towards the latter direction as a result of what he said are its miscalculations, sterile debates and the paralysis of multilateral mechanisms. Sadly, nothing much has changed since the Secretary-General made that statement.

Things are as complicated as ever with the current deadlock in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Just a year ago, the Philippines expressed its disappointment over the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We also joined others in expressing disappointment in the failure of the 2005 World Summit to include a section on disarmament and non-proliferation in its Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). We are likewise disheartened that the credibility of the Disarmament Commission and its capability to fulfil its mandate and advance the disarmament agenda has been put into question, especially when it only made minor changes to its working methods after meeting for three weeks in April.

Despite those frustrating developments, the Philippines is one with the Secretary-General in saying that now is the time to break the current impasse in multilateral negotiations and to bring disarmament back to the international agenda. Urgent progress is needed, and all Member States must muster the political will to achieve the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Philippines recognizes the danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the wrong hands. The world has seen how far terrorists are

willing to go in wreaking havoc just to deliver their message of hate. We cannot afford to make the mistake of allowing the wholesale murder of innocents through the use of those weapons. We share the concern of other Member States about the threat posed by the trafficking of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons to non-State actors and by their use for terrorist activities. We also share the concern about the lack of measures in existing international law to address the problem.

As an elected member of the Security Council from 2004 to 2005, the Philippines actively participated in the negotiations that led to the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). As a former Vice-Chairman of the 1540 Committee, the Philippines will actively engage in efforts to strengthen all relevant international initiatives to prevent non-State actors from acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction. While the Philippines believes that the best way to prevent that from happening is to eliminate such weapons, the problem of proliferation needs to be immediately addressed through creative, dynamic and proactive approaches. Domestic controls, including legislative measures, to prevent the proliferation of such weapons, in particular their transfer for terrorist purposes, could be adopted.

This year, we mark the tenth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The 176 signatures and 135 ratifications by States that have been gathered so far indicate the international community's continued recognition of the important role of the Treaty, not only in bringing an end to a period that has witnessed over 2,000 nuclear test explosions worldwide but also for its contribution to the enhancement of world peace and security.

The Philippines is proud to be among the 17 of the 32 countries from the Asia-Pacific region that has completed the ratification process. As current Chair of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Philippines would like to highlight and welcome the recent ratification of the Treaty by Viet Nam, a fellow ASEAN member. This is of particular importance since Viet Nam is one of the States listed in annex 2 of the Treaty. The Philippines reiterates its call on those States that have not signed and/or ratified the Treaty, in particular the 10 remaining annex 2 States, to do so as soon as possible to maintain momentum for the Treaty's early entry into force.

Lastly, Madam Chair, I would like to conclude by once again assuring you of the full support and cooperation of the Philippine delegation as you steer the work of the First Committee to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): Let me begin, Madam, by saying how pleased I am to see you, a close friend, chairing the First Committee at this session. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. Iceland, as a member of the European Economic Area, but not of the European Union, aligned itself with the statement of the European Union, delivered by the representative of Finland at the commencement of the general debate, but I would like to make some further brief remarks.

For a small country like Iceland, a world where relations among States are governed by the rule of law is of fundamental importance. The international community has developed various ways and means to govern international activity and interaction between States, where the rights and obligations of States are stipulated. Disarmament and arms control treaties and conventions which have been negotiated over recent decades form an integral part of that system.

In recent years, however, and as so many have mentioned in this debate, we have seen setbacks in the multilateral field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We strongly agree with what my colleague from the Philippines said a few minutes ago: that now is the time to break the impasse in multilateral negotiations and to put disarmament back on the international agenda.

Two weeks ago, on 20 September, a Joint Ministerial Statement was adopted to support the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on the tenth anniversary of the Treaty's opening for signature. The Foreign Minister of Iceland was among the ministers who put their names to the statement. Nuclear testing has been regarded as the engine of nuclear proliferation. Ratification of the CTBT is crucial in halting and reversing the reliance on weapons of mass destruction. In spite of strong global aspirations, manifested in 176 signatures and 135 ratifications, the entry into force of that important Treaty has, regrettably, not been achieved. We encourage States that have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has served as the main pillar in global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Credible and effective verification in order to prevent violations is a key component of the NPT regime.

Iceland supports efforts to find diplomatic solutions to the many questions surrounding Iran's nuclear programme. The Iranian authorities must fully comply with the requirements of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for transparency in the development of their nuclear programme.

Iceland expresses its great concern at the announced intention of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to conduct a nuclear test in the future. We urge the North Korean authorities to reconsider their plan and not to proceed with it.

In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General shares his concern that the international community faces two divergent courses.

> "One path, that of active engagement by all Member States, can take us to a world in which the proliferation of nuclear weapons is restricted and reversed through trust, dialogue and negotiated agreement. The other more dangerous course could lead to a world of fearful instability where such weapons are the currency of international relations and in which non-State actors acquire the means to carry out terrorism with potentially catastrophic consequences." (*A/61/1, para. 94*)

All of us want to make the world a better and safer place. We should all make our contributions to ensure that the former path described by the Secretary-General, is the one that we take.

I would like to highlight the issue of small arms and light weapons. Our understanding of the use and impact of such weapons has increased over the past few years. The toll such weapons take is widespread and complex and threatens the stability of States and the security and well-being of people. Iceland is deeply disappointed that during the past summer we were unable to reach an agreement on the best way forward to tackle the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons.

In line with the need to control the undesirable proliferation of conventional arms, Iceland favours an international treaty to establish common standards for the global trade in conventional arms. We support the initiative of a group of Member States that will, in the course of this session, introduce a draft resolution to establish a group of governmental experts to examine the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms.

Iceland attaches great importance to the reform of the United Nations, including improvements in the working methods of the General Assembly and its Main Committees. In that context, we subscribe to the view expressed by Japan yesterday, that we simply make sure that we implement resolution 59/95, on improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): It pleases me at the outset, Madam, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, to present to you my sincerest congratulations on your election as chairperson of this important Committee. I wish you and all the other members of the Bureau every success. I also take this opportunity to thank your predecessor for his excellent management of the previous session and to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for the valuable information contained in his briefing to the Committee, which reflected the efforts made by the United Nations in addressing the international arms race and the maintenance of international peace and security. I also wish to align my delegation with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The serious discussions in this Committee reflect the importance of bringing about a convergence of views and international consensus on disarmament issues, particularly on those that have been the subject of disagreement among Member States in previous years. Such divisiveness led to the failure of international negotiations on the disarmament section of the 2005 World Summit Outcome and to the failure of the seventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Furthermore, the activities of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva are at a stalemate due to an inability to reach consensus on its agenda.

The international arms race in all its forms continues to represent a real and dangerous threat to

the international stability and economic development to which all our peoples aspire. This comes at a time when we have come to realize the seriousness of potential confrontations and the number of dangerous hot spots that could flare up, as well as the possibility that arms could be diverted to irresponsible groups. It is therefore imperative for us, as a priority, to strengthen international cooperation in all areas of disarmament in accordance with the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, and the relevant United Nations conventions and treaties. These instruments do not make distinctions between States and ensure transparency with regard to respect for the national and regional sovereignty and security of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and their legitimate right to self-defence.

We call upon delegations to show the necessary flexibility, political will and sense of responsibility to bring about international consensus on key pending issues on our agenda. We remind States of the obligations they have undertaken under disarmament treaties and protocols. Those principles should be the framework for our negotiations and our common objective concerning non-proliferation issues, regional and international confidence-building measures and other substantive issues. Failure to resolve such issues has hampered the peaceful settlement of many disputes and has slowed the pace of development.

We would also like to emphasize that our discussions on improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee should be objective and help in maintaining the key priorities in addressing the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and in putting an end to doctrines of nuclear deterrence pursued by some States, particularly in hot spots such as the Middle East, the Arabian Gulf region and South Asia.

The United Arab Emirates takes this opportunity to reaffirm its full commitment to the disarmament treaties and instruments to which it is a party, particularly the NPT, which bans the production of weapons of mass destruction in order to promote confidence-building measures and to strengthen regional and international stability. In this context, the United Arab Emirates calls for self-restraint and balance, and for the resolution of regional conflicts by peaceful means, and deplores the escalation of tension and confrontation. That commonly occurs because of the insistence by some States on retaining their nuclear arsenals or because of attempts by other States to develop, test and possess nuclear weapons.

From this perspective, we reaffirm our support for the right of States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to encourage technological and scientific exchanges in this area within the limits of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) non-proliferation system. In the meantime, we hope that the ongoing negotiations on the Iranian nuclear question will lead to a lasting and peaceful settlement that ensures the safety and security of the countries of the region and avoids threats or unnecessary confrontations. We also emphasize that the international community must deal with this issue in a transparent manner that ensures the implementation of all relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in particular those of the General Assembly, and the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, like those in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, South-East Asia, Africa and, most recently, Central Asia. It is thus imperative for influential States Members of the United Nations to exert pressure on Israel to dismantle its nuclear programme and subject its nuclear facilities to the full-scope safeguards regime of the IAEA. We also call upon all States to abide by the resolution calling for the suspension of all scientific, technological and financial assistance used to develop these facilities, which threaten the peace process in the region and the security and stability of its people.

We reaffirm our support for the proposals calling for the conclusion of a universal, legally binding instrument providing security assurances to non-nuclear States. We also hope that serious negotiations will be initiated among nuclear-weapon States ultimately leading to the fulfilment of their commitments, including the commitment to gradually reduce and eliminate their nuclear arsenals, particularly their strategic offensive nuclear weapons, within a specific time frame and in accordance with article VI of the NPT. This would enhance the effectiveness, universality and comprehensiveness of the treaties on the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction and would protect humanity from the risk of genocide.

We also welcome the convening earlier this year of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We also welcome the adoption of the binding political International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We hope that all States will take appropriate practical steps to combat the illicit trade in those weapons, which has been shown to prolong conflicts and wars and to threaten the safety, security and prosperity of people everywhere.

In conclusion, I hope this Committee's deliberations will lead to a consensus on strengthening our activities, enabling us to meet the aspirations of our peoples to security, peace, development and regional and international stability.

The Chairperson: Before adjourning the meeting, I wish to remind delegations that the rolling list of speakers for the general debate will be closed today at 6 p.m.

The meeting rose at noon.